



Getting around in Germany –
what do I need to know?
The essential rules of the road

ENGLISH



Welcome to Germany

You are on our roads every day, walking, cycling, riding on buses or trams, and perhaps even on a motorbike or in a car. There are numerous traffic rules in Germany for your own protection and in the interest of general safety. While many of them will be familiar, others may be completely new to you.

The most important rule of all is: **Be considerate and do not put yourself or others in danger.**

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Walking



IN CITIES, there are footpaths for people to walk on. Always use these footpaths. Roads are for motor vehicles and bicycles.

If there is no footpath, walk on the edge of the road.



OUTSIDE OF TOWNS Here you are only permitted to walk along the left-hand side of the road, as this gives you a better view of oncoming traffic and allows you to react by moving aside if necessary.

When walking in a group, follow one after the other.



Some streets or neighbourhoods are exclusively for people on foot: **these are called PEDESTRIAN ZONES.**

IN TRAFFIC CALMED AREAS, pedestrians are permitted to use the entire street, while motorists and cyclists are required to show extra consideration for pedestrians.

Children are allowed to play in the street and ride various children's bicycles, tricycles, roller skates, etc. Motorists must be considerate of this and drive at walking speed.

Road users must not obstruct each other. Pedestrians do not have right of way there, however.



It is advisable to wear **light-coloured or reflective clothing** at dawn, dusk and at night.



Cyclists are allowed to ride on some pavements and occasionally also in pedestrian zones. In these cases, there will be a sign indicating such. Mutual consideration is particularly important here.

SHARED FOOTPATHS AND CYCLEWAYS

When crossing the road, you must do so in a direct and quick way. Watch out for motor vehicles and bicycles in particular. If possible, try not to cross between parked vehicles.

It is best to choose places where it is safe to cross, even if this means going a little out of your way.



PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC LIGHTS

There are separate traffic lights for pedestrians. These are usually found at intersections, but sometimes also between them. When the light is red you must always stand and wait. You can cross when the light turns green. Still make sure to check that drivers and cyclists are stopping.





PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC LIGHTS

often have a **yellow button** that you have to press to make the light turn green. Wait until it turns green before you cross.



ZEBRA CROSSINGS

You can also cross the road safely here. Vehicles are required to stop. Nevertheless, please take care, make it clear that you want to cross, **wait until the vehicles stop** and then cross the road quickly.

CENTRAL ISLAND

Vehicles do not necessarily have to stop here. Make sure you look carefully to ensure that the road is clear and walk swiftly to the island. **You can wait at the island** if there is traffic coming from the opposite direction.





BE CAREFUL WHEN CROSSING STREETS WITH TRAMS

These always have right of way, as they cannot brake very quickly.

When out and about with small children, **hold their hand** so they don't jump into the road.





If you see a vehicle with blue lights or hear a siren, please take extreme care and do not walk into the road. The sound usually indicates an oncoming police vehicle, a fire engine or an **ambulance responding to an emergency**.

BUSES cannot be stopped by signalling with your hand in Germany. They only stop at bus stops. A timetable with the departure times is also usually posted there.

Always keep an eye on the traffic and make sure to avoid distractions!





Riding a bicycle

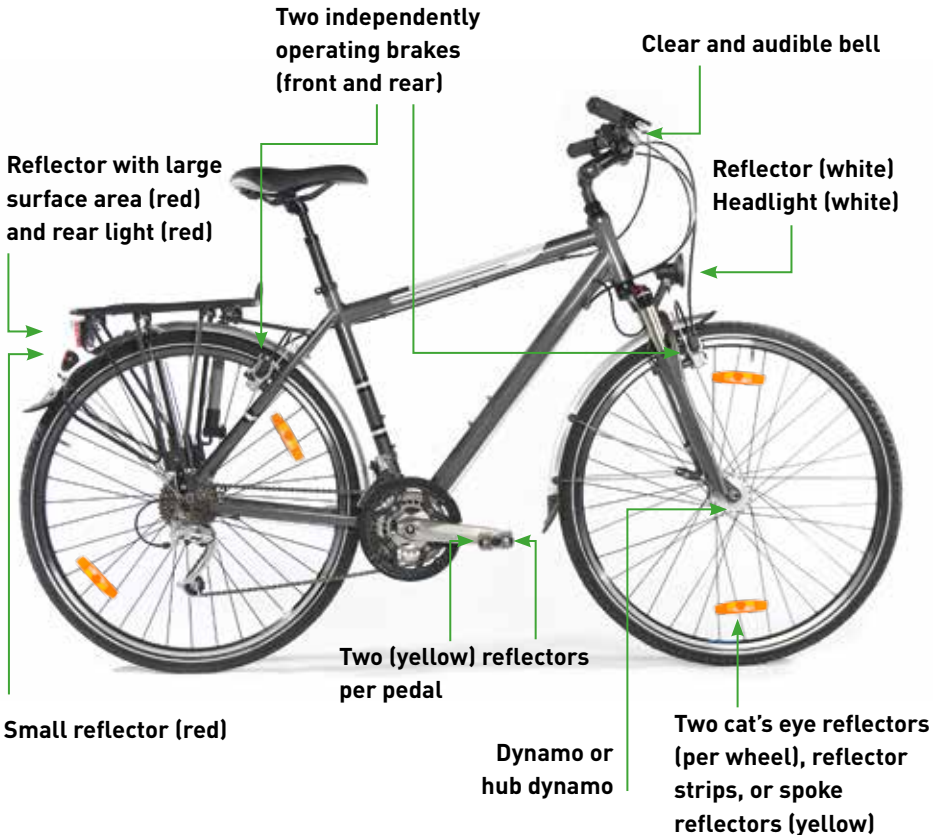


In general, the **same traffic rules that apply to car drivers** also apply to cyclists.

(Right of way rules, one-way streets, traffic lights, etc.)

Roadworthy bicycles

Bicycles must be equipped with lights, brakes, and a bell.
Only one person is allowed to ride on any one bicycle.





Small children must be strapped into **special seats or trailers**.

When cycling, you must ride as far to the right as possible.

Maintain sufficient **distance** from parked cars to avoid being hit by a door that is opened suddenly.



If possible, avoid riding bicycles side by side. When travelling with several people, **ride one behind the other**.

If you wish to turn left or right on your bicycle, you must always signal this with your outstretched hand. Make sure the lane is clear before turning.

If the road has no right of way signs, traffic coming from the right may enter the intersection first (right before left). At this type of right-before-left intersection, motorists must let cyclists coming from the right go first.



Some special regulations are also in place for cyclists, e.g. **traffic lights for cyclists** or the permission to cycle on a one-way street against the direction of traffic.

Additional bicycle “frei” sign

If the cycle path has a blue sign with a white bicycle, you are obliged to use this cycle path. In the absence of these signs, you are allowed to ride on the road, but you may also stay on the cycle path.

Cycleway

If this sign is in place for the cycleway, it is compulsory to use it. In this instance you are not allowed to ride on the road with the cars.



Do not ride a bicycle if you have been drinking alcohol.
Do not make phone calls when riding a bicycle.

Some roads **do not permit cycling under any circumstances**, e.g. motorways.

Caution: If a truck driver is turning right, they may not be able to see you. That is why it is best to stay behind the truck and, if necessary, relinquish your right of way.

Footpaths and pedestrian zones can also be made open to cyclists through signs. In these areas, cyclists are not allowed to go faster than pedestrians and must take them into consideration.

Wear a bicycle helmet when cycling whenever possible. It may save you from a serious head injury.





Children are not allowed to ride on the road until after their 8th birthday, before that they may only ride on the footpath.

In Germany, children normally take a cycling test in Year 4 of primary school.

If the traffic situation becomes too confusing, you can also dismount and push the bike.

You must then behave like a pedestrian.





CARGO BIKES

You can also travel around the city on a cargo bike. All of the rules that apply to cyclists also apply to those riding cargo bikes. Please familiarise yourself with your cargo bike before using it. Take care to secure children in particular and make sure you and all passengers are wearing a helmet.



FAST CYCLE ROUTES

A green arrow for cyclists indicates that cyclists are allowed to turn right onto protected lanes, cycle lanes or dedicated cycleways while the traffic lights are red.



Riding an e-scooter

E-scooters are allowed on **cycleways, cycle lanes and bicycle boulevards**. You may only move onto the road if none of these are available. E-scooters are not permitted on the footpath, in pedestrian zones or on one-way streets against the direction of travel.



When there is a ban on entering one-way streets, the additional bicycle "frei" sign also applies to electric micro vehicles.

Electric micro vehicles are permitted to use other traffic areas with an additional electric micro vehicle "frei" sign.

There is no requirement to hold a moped test certificate or a driving licence to ride an e-scooter.



The minimum age for riding an electric scooter (electric micro vehicle) is 14 years.

Helmets are not mandatory. **It is, however, strongly recommended that you wear a helmet**, as this can protect you from head injuries.

E-scooters require an insurance licence plate. Only one person is allowed on the e-scooter at a time.



Riding a motor scooter, moped or motorcycle



There are many different types of two-wheeled motor vehicles in Germany, for which very different rules apply. The following applies to everyone, however:

You must always wear a helmet and be insured, and meet the minimum driving age.

You usually also need a special driving licence or a test certificate.

If you hold an international or foreign driving licence, please find out if it is valid in Germany and for how long, and which types of motorbikes you are allowed to drive with it.





As a general rule, all motorised two-wheelers must be driven exclusively on the road. Only mopeds which have a maximum speed of 25 km/h are allowed to ride on cycle paths outside cities and where specific signage is in place.

The right-hand rule also applies here for all road users except cyclists.

You are not allowed to weave through traffic on motorised scooters, mopeds or motorcycles.

Motorcycles can only be ridden by a maximum of 2 persons. Do not take children on a motorcycle.

Do not ride a motorcycle if you have been drinking alcohol.





Driving a car



To drive a car in Germany, you need a **valid driving licence**. If you hold an international or foreign driving licence, please find out if it is valid in Germany and for how long.

Cars must always be insured.

When borrowing a car from friends or acquaintances, check whether the insurance cover also applies to you as the person driving the car.

Everyone travelling in the car must wear a seat belt, even in the back seat.





All children under 12 years of age who are shorter than 150 cm must also be secured in **dedicated child car seats**. Different models are available to suit different age groups.

Do not talk on the phone while holding your smartphone, type messages or operate other electronic devices while driving.

Do not drive if you have been drinking alcohol.

Different road types have different maximum speeds that you are allowed to drive.

Observe the signage on the right-hand side of the roads. Sometimes you may have to drive more slowly and carefully depending on the road conditions or the weather. **Please adjust your speed to the conditions.**





If you are involved in an accident, call the emergency services line on 112. **Always stay at the scene of the accident until the police arrive.**



Red means stop! Never drive through a red traffic light or a red stop sign (pictured). Fines are normally imposed for this, and doing so may even result in a temporary driving ban.



RESTRICTION ON OVERTAKING SINGLE-TRACK VEHICLES

This sign indicates that you are not allowed to overtake single-track vehicles in your car.

When overtaking cyclists, you must keep a distance of 1.5 metres in urban areas and 2 metres outside urban areas.



IN THE CITY

Take special care in the city. There are **pedestrians and cyclists, buses, trucks and sometimes trams, as well as many intersections and traffic lights.**



In Germany, the beginning and the end of the city or town are marked.

In built-up areas, the maximum speed limit is normally 50 km/h.

IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS AND OUTSIDE OF SCHOOLS, a reduced speed limit of 30 km/h often applies. These are often entire zones. Otherwise, there can be almost any speed limit in cities: 10 km/h, 20 km/h, 30 km/h, 40 km/h, etc.

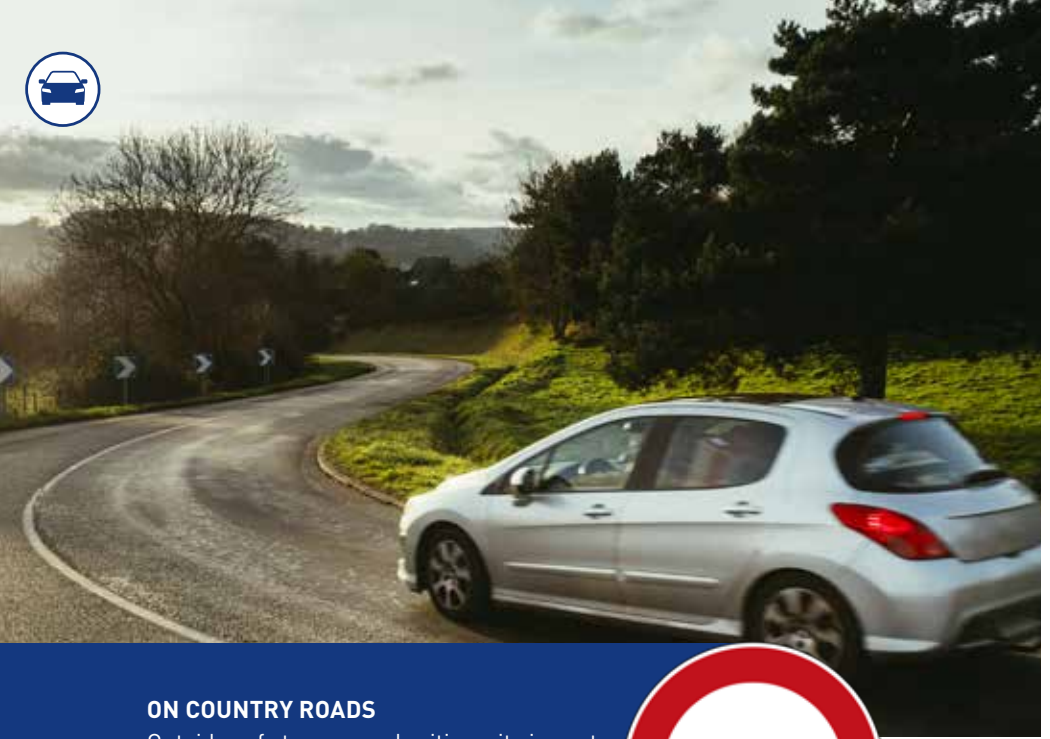
Always pay close attention to the traffic signs. They are located on the right-hand side of the road.



Take extreme care when turning right or left, especially when turning round blind corners: allow pedestrians and cyclists going straight ahead to pass first, as they have priority.

You and all passengers in the car must also wear your seat belt in built-up areas.





ON COUNTRY ROADS

Outside of towns and cities, it is not permitted to drive faster than 100 km/h on rural roads; the speed limit is often much lower. This is indicated by corresponding signs.

Be careful when overtaking on country roads: there is often insufficient visibility. You should therefore drive a little more cautiously.



If you see a **no overtaking sign**, you are not allowed to overtake under any circumstances! You also may not cross a solid line!

Watch out for oncoming traffic when turning left!





ON THE MOTORWAY

There are usually at least two lanes in each direction on the motorway. The recommended maximum speed is 130 km/h.

There are often other limits, however, which are signposted. Please always observe these. Serious fines and driving bans may be imposed if you do not.

You must also drive on the right-hand side of the road on motorways (right-hand driving rule). When overtaking, you must use the left-hand lane to pass slower vehicles in the right-hand lane. Overtaking on the right is prohibited, as is reversing or turning.

You may only stop on the hard shoulder of motorways in the event of an emergency or breakdown.

If you find yourself in an emergency situation on the motorway and have no way of making a phone call, **emergency telephones** are located at intervals from which you can call for help.



In an emergency or breakdown situation, please always wear a high-visibility vest. These should be kept ready in the vehicle. Wearing high-visibility vests in other circumstances is prohibited.

To take a break, look for a rest area ("Rastplatz"). Only pull onto or off of the motorway using the provided slip roads.

Never walk on the motorway!





Further information:



www.germanroadsafety.de

This website also has this brochure available for download in other languages free of charge.



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